

Message Text

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DEPARTMENT PASS TO AMBASSADOR VOLPE

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SUBJECT: PRESS REACION TO AMBASSADOR VOLPE'S SPEECH AND EPOCA
INTERVIEW

SUMMARY: AMBASSADOR VOLPE'S BOLOGNA SPEECH AND INTERVIEW IN
EPOCA ELICIT STRONG EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST IN ITALIAN PRESS
CIRCLES. END SUMMARY. TEXTS WILL BE AIRPOUCHED.

1. BACKGROUND. AMBASSADOR JOHN A. VOLPE GAVE ADDRESS TO
LIONS CLUB IN BOLOGNA SEPTEMBER 19 AND EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
TO ITALIAN MASS MAGAZINE EPOCA WHICH CAME OUT SEPTEMBER 23.
BOTH STATEMENTS DESIGNED TO PROMOTE GREATER AWARENESS AND
DIALOGUE ON PROBLEMS OF IMMEDIATE AND MUTUAL CONCERN, NAMELY
SECURITY, THE RELATIONS BETWEEN MAJORITY AND OPPOSITION AND
THE UNDERLYING IMPORTANCE OF GREATER COOPERATION AMONG
INDUSTRIALIZED COUNTRIES TO SOLVE PRESSING PROBLEMS.

2. STATEMENTS GIVEN BROAD FACTUAL COVERAGE INCLUDING E.G.,
CORRIERE DELLA SERA, LA STAMPA, IL RESTO DEL CARLINO, IL TEMPO,
IL GIORNALE. MOST PAPERS STRESSED NATO-RELATED ASPECTS OF
AMBASSADOR'S REMARKS, IN WHICH HE EMPHASIZED THAT SECURITY
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WAS NOT JUST AMERICAN PROBLEM, BUT ITALIANS SHOULD CONSIDER

THEIR SITUATION IF NATO DID NOT EXIST. AMBASSADOR'S EPOCA COMMENT ON THE LOCAL POLITICAL/ECONOMIC SCENE ("NEW AND SENSATIONAL CURES OFTEN WERE WORSE THAN DISEASE") GIVEN SECOND BILLING, FOLLOWED BY POINTS STRESSING INTERDEPENDENCE. TEMPO AND GIORNALE USED EXTENSIVE DIRECT QUOTES. ONLY ONE PAPER, SENTER-LEFT IL GLOBO, MENTIONED AMBASSADOR'S COURTESY CALL ON BOLOGNA COMMUNIST MAYOR AND FACT THAT IT WAS FIRST SUCH ON BOLOGNA MAYOR SINCE WORLD WAR II.

3. ADVERSE EDITORIAL REACTION CAME FROM PRO-COMMUNIST PAESE SERA IN FRONT PAGE EDITORIAL BY ARTURO GISMONDI, WHO SAID TIMING OF AMBASSADOR'S REMARKS ON EVE OF LEONE VISIT WAS INAPPROPRIATE AND EFFORT TO PRESSURE ITALY. NOTING AMBASSADOR'S REASSURANCE THAT US COULD NOT VIEW ITALY'S PROBLEMS WITH DETACHMENT BECAUSE OF CLOSE TIES AND "INTEREST" IN ITALY'S SITUATION, GISMONDI SAID THAT GREECE AND CHILE WERE WITNESS TO THE FACT THAT WHEN THE US EXPRESSED "INTEREST" IN A COUNTRY, TROUBLE WAS IN STORE FOR THEM. THE EDITORIAL ACCEPTED AMBASSADOR VOLPE'S REMARK THAT HE HAD RECEIVED NOTHING ABOUT POSSIBLE RELOCATION OF BASES TO ITALY, BUT ADDED THAT THE CIA, PENTAGON, AND NATO HAD THEIR OWN CHANNELS FOR SUCH THINGS.

4. AVANTI, SOCIALIST PARTY ORGAN, NOTED THAT THE AMBASSADOR'S EXPRESSIONS OF HIGH REGARD FOR ITALY DID NOT SQUARE WITH US ACTIONS IN EXCLUDING ITALY FROM OIL SUMMIT MEETING. L'UNITA (PCI) COVERED NEITHER STORY.

5. WHILE PAESE SERA AND AVANTI COMMENTS ONLY EDITORIAL REACTION TO DATE, INFORMAL SOUNDINGS IN BOLGNA AND AMONG PRESS CONTACTS REVEAL AMBASSADOR'S STATEMENTS REGARDED AS EMBASSY EFFORT TO MAKE EXPLICIT STATEMENT ON CURRENT PRIORITY ISSUES REGARDING ITALY. WE SENSE DEGREE OF APPREHENSION ON LEFT ABOUT POSSIBLE NEW US INITIATIVES WHICH WOULD TIE ITALY CLOSER TO US. CENTER-CONSERVATIVES INDICATE BASIC AGREEMENT WITH CONTENTS OF STATEMENTS, BUT LACK OF COMMENT FROM CONSERVATIVES CONSISTENT WITH PAST UNWILLINGNESS TO TAKE RISK OF SUPPORTING US INPUBLIC.

6. COMMENT: BOTH STATEMENTS HAVE BEEN PROPERLY PERCEIVED IN ITALIAN PRESS CIRCLES AS CLEAR EXPRESSION OF AMERICAN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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INTEREST IN ITALY, BOTH AS NATO PARTNERS AND LONG-STANDING FRIEND. BEAUDRY

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